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ABSTRACT

Some organizational activities can be understood in anthropological terms as "rites" affecting and reinforcing the organizational culture. Six specific rites are described and a case study is reported in which a change in a school committee's culture was attempted through a change in its rites. The first three rites examined relate to the individual's role and status in the organization: the rite of passage, focusing on acceptance of new individuals; the rite of enhancement, recognizing individuals' contributions; and the rite of degradation, reducing individuals' social positions in response to infractions. The other three rites reviewed serve as social glue uniting the organization's members: rites of integration, in which social distinctions are set aside to encourage group identity; rites of conflict reduction; and rites of renewal, such as staff development workshops. Such a workshop, conducted to improve relationships within a committee formed of school principals and central office administrators, provided an opportunity to change organizational culture. The committee members made a concerted effort to trust one another enough to allow concerns and criticisms to be brought into the open. The result, illustrated in terms of changes in the committee's rites, was distinct improvement in morale and communication. (PGD)

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Using Rites to Change the Culture of a Principals Council

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Presented at the Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association

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Using Rites to Change the Culture of a Principals Council[1]

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With the advent of such books as *In Search of Excellence*[2] and *Corporate Cultures*[3], researchers of educational organizations have discovered that culture has been rediscovered as a powerful explanatory variable. As the concept is displaced from anthropology to organizational research[4] a new emphasis is being given to the identification of those cultures associated with effectiveness in schools.[5] However culture is not a simple concept. When applied to organizations the term *culture* has multiple meanings. For example:

> *"Smircich in 'Concepts of Culture,[6]' distinguishes between uses of the concept as a variable and as a root metaphor. The first approach views the organization as a system and culture as simply a part of the organization or its environment. . . . In the second approach, culture replaces system as the guiding metaphor, and organizations are viewed as expressive forms rather than in economic or material terms.[7]*

In a more general sense the term is used to convey the nature of meanings contained in the ideologies, norms and values of the organization, or in its subsystems[8]. This is the substantive dimension of culture. There is also a dimension which deals with culture as form, as a series of practices that make more evident the substantive dimension.[9] There are a variety of ways for uncovering the form so as to read the essence of shared beliefs and values that characterize the culture. Ethnographies[10], myths, stories and sagas[11], unstructured interviews[12], semiotics[13], and rites and ceremonials[14] are but a few of these methods for analysis. Each of these have their advantages and limitations, but it is the last mentioned that is of particular interest here, for it is possibly through rites and rituals that the organizational text may be both read and changed.

The purposes of this paper are twofold: first, is to elaborate on six rites that Trice and Beyer[15] have indicated as commonly occurring in organizations by discussing each rite and follow with an example from an

educational organization; and second, to present a case which tested the proposition that change in the culture of a key school committee could occur through a change in its rites.

Six Organizational Rites Applied to Education

A rite is a set of planned activities leading to a predetermined outcome. That outcome is both practical and expressive of selected organizational beliefs or values. The activity set for a rite is usually elaborate, dramatic, and public.[16] Examples of rites in organizations include collective bargaining, strikes, and the bestowing of awards or promotions. While each of these has some practical and desired outcome, it is often the case that the expressive end outweighs the practical. This is most obvious in the use of the strike as an expression of solidarity and power rather than as an instrument for work stoppage. The examples that follow parallel the six types of rites that Trice and Beyer have identified for corporate organizations. The first three rites deal with individuals; that is with changes in role, or status as when a person joins the system, leaves the system through coercion, or receives a promotion or recognition for work accomplished.

1. Rites of Passage

Van Gennep identified the set of rites that mark the transition of persons from one social role or status level to another as "rites of passage."[17] Most familiar are those that facilitate new entrants into the system. Examples include basic training, fraternity and sorority initiations, and workshops for new teachers or administrators. The granting of tenure is the close of an extended ceremonial made up of a set of rites.[18] Key activites in this set include teacher observations by representatives of the administration, sharing the evaluation report, and the joint signing and filing of the report. Rituals are shared and memorized: how high to have the window shades, the way to fill out the lesson plan, the "safe" way to arrange the classroom. The probationary teachers share stories about the principal and his or her quirks and pet peeves. "They have to say something negative in case they want to get rid of you. But it doesn't really mean anything." "How long was your write-up?" "Mine was six pages." "What does a short one mean?"

The veteran teachers are also a part of the process as they share the ins and outs of the school. Nor are they reluctant to share stories of how the "failures" behaved: the ones that did not get a good evaluation or did not

receive tenure become myths to be passed on from old-timers to novices, year after year.

And there are like rites for new administrators with the accompanying stories of successful interviews with the school board, the announcement of appointment with the assignments to schools. In school organizations the transitions in status are often signaled by symbols of office. These are not usually uniforms, but rather locations in the building, quality of desks, lamps and similar accoutrement, or eating areas reserved for selected persons.

2. **Rites of Enhancement**

The culminating activity of a passage rite may be a recognition affair to pay tribute to the newly acquired status. This would be a rite of enhancement. Such rites accord the opportunity to reinforce the types of behaviors that are desired for that organization. These public recognitions typically occur as end-of-the-year ceremonies and include "teacher of the year," yearbook dedications, or award banquets. There is usually a day set aside in schools when the PTA gives its endorsement to a teacher, aide, or administrator who has demonstrated certain behaviors conducive to the values that are desired by the parents. "But usually, more than praise and recognition are bestowed; enhanced persons are also rewarded by material rewards and new statuses."[19] Some colleges and universities have instituted merit pay as a way of recognizing in a tangible way the efforts of faculty or administration. The rite is enhancing for the individual and is intended to designate the desired organizational behaviors so that others might understand them and emulate. While rites of enhancement are normally advantageous for promoting an "in-group" feeling, it appears that such rites as merit plans may have just the opposite effect when instituted in educational organizations.

However, rites of enhancement are not only the formal recognitions mentioned above, they also include the "little awards" that frequently occur within departments or cliques. The luncheon for secretaries, taking the soon-to-retire administrator out and the semi-serious introduction of the new principal to his charges are other examples that also reinforce the culture of that organization.

3. **Rites of Degradation.**

Rites of degredation are used relatively infrequently by social groups; their purpose is to dissolve the social identities and

power of certain members. A complete rite of degradation includes the following elements: (1) the collective attention is focused on the people being degraded and their behaviors are publicaly associated with failures and problems, (2) the degraded people are discredited by some supposedly objective report or analysis, and (3) the degraded people are publicly stripped of their positions and statuses. In a sense, rites of degradation combine the opposites of both rites of passage and rites of enhancement.[20]

Every state has its own process for removing a teacher who is already on tenure. In New York there is the well known 3020-A process involving notice, right to counsel, judgement by an impartial tribunal, right to avoid self-incrimination, presentation of evidence, right to cross-examination, right to have witnesses, proof of guilt, record of the hearing, and right of appeal.[21] Less well documented are the other procedures that are said to occur for personnel not performing at the level expected for that organization. These include assignments to a teacher of the more troublesome classes, transfers to schools that have difficulty in holding on to teachers, assigning extra lunchroom, hall, or bathroom monitoring; and, in the case of administrators the degrading assignment may be as disciplinarian or being passed over for promotions. Sometimes these come in the form of horizontal transfers to rather meaningless positions in the system. The system members are well aware of these symbolic moves as punishments for indiscretions or incompetence. The grapevine will carry the transgressions throughout the system to reinforce from a negative perspective the cultural expectations for this organization.

We turn now to three rites that deal with groups or with the organization as a whole in contrast to the three above that dealt primarily with individuals within the organization. In both cases the rites serve similar ends in establishing the social "glue" that unites the members of the organization.

4. Rites of Integration

This category of rites is directly associated with the bonding power of the organizational network. These rites are most effective when crossing status lines or when bringing different units of the organization together for the ceremonials of the rite. In other words these rites are considerably larger in scope than the celebrations of the end of the week clique in the local pub. Trice and Beyer list the following as examples of such rites:[22]

- Annual meetings of professional associations where the participants often behave as though it were a fiesta or carnival.

- Christmas parties and annual picnics. These events give principals, teachers, aides and custodians an opportunity to interact without apparent concern for status differences. There is a temporary sense of closeness, of pulling together to "win the game."

- In business and industry the annual meeting of the corporation is another example. In education this is equivalent to the annual meeting of the school board wherein the board reports its stewardship to the public and presents the proposed budget. While this is often a high conflict situation it may also be characterized by disparate groups coming together in a united enterprise. In one district it is now a tradition for the school board members and the superintendent to do the cooking and wait on the school staff at a barbecue held just prior to the annual meeting.

These events permit expressions of emotion--including unacknowledged conflict--that are not allowed on other occasions. Letting off steam doesn't count in the same way as it would on other occasions.[23]

5. **Rites of Conflict Reduction**

This group of rites has a purpose of ameliorating conflicts, reducing aggressive behavior and thereby restoring equilibrium in what had become a disturbed state of the system.[24] Among the more common examples of these rites in education are:

- Collective bargaining with the associated rituals of arbitration and, where all else fails, strikes. All of these help to reduce the hostilities of the affected parties either by accomplishing a compromise or mutually accepted end, or by allowing the affected party to act out its hostilities in an organized strike.

- Committees, task forces, and other work groups provide opportunity for members to work through problems and reduce frustrations. This is particularly evident in the meting event where rituals of agenda agreement, motions, votes, minutes, discussion formats, etc. are acted through on a regular basis. These meetings provide an opportunity to

view the dominant culture of that organizational sub-system. For instance an English department's meetings may be long, discursive and ruled by consensus while the Science department in the same school might find its meetings short and chair-directed. So too is the possibility of meeting contrasts between central office and the school building. The agenda setter for one administrative level or for one department may choose to emphasize issues for discussion and group choice while another level or head may be directive and choose items that reinforce values of control, discipline, or conformity.

6. Rites of Renewal

Organizations and their sub-units are not always at peak performance; they require some fine tuning at times. The rites that have this purpose of strengthening or refurbishing the social structure are labeled rites of renewal. "Prominent current examples include most so-called organization development (OD) activities: MBO programs, job redesign, team building, sensitivity training, survey-feedback interventions, quality-of-work-life (QWL) programs, quality circles, etc."[25] In academe the examples of these rites are seen in workshops for a department, the annual working retreat that boards of education frequently use, the extended process associated with accreditation reviews, as well as the shorter "superintendent's days" mandated in some states for staff development. The superintendent is expected to close down school two or three times a year so that teachers may participate in a series of ceremonies and rituals: the superintendent's welcome, the inspiring guest speaker, brief demonstrations or work meetings then lunch at a place away from schools but with colleagues.

> *Some of the possible latent consequences of such renewal rites include reassuring members that something is being done about problems, disguising the nature of real problems, deferring their acknowledgement, and focusing attention toward some problems and away from others. Rites of renewal also tend to legitimate and reinforce the existing systems of power and authority that form the basis of the social arrangements being tinkered with.*[26]

These, then, are the six organizational rites identified by Trice and Beyer as applicable to the corporate world, and which we have argued as also having relevance for understanding the dominant culture of educational organizations. In the table below [27]each rite is listed with an example from education and an expressed outcome for such a rite.

Insert Table 1 about here

In the next section of this paper a case is described wherein organizational rites emerged as a key element. The case was not entered with organizational rites as the major framework for analysis and change; however, during the intervention flow an advantitious exposure to this framework provided an opportunity to test the hypothesis offered by Trice and Beyer that rites have clear potential for facilitating cultural change efforts.[28]

A Case Study of "Mending Bridges" in a Principals Council

The case took place in a large metropolitan school district in New York State in 1984. The district has 11 secondary schools and 34 elementary schools serving over 32,000 students. There are also about 4 alternative programs for secondary youngsters. The central office administrative structure includes the superintendent, associate and assistant superintendents at layer one. The second layer involves supervising directors for elementary, secondary and vocational education to whom the school principals report. The Council of Secondary Principals (generally known as *The Principals Council*) was the unit that sought consultant assistance. There were approximately 11 to 15 persons who would normally meet as "The Council."[29] Included were all of the secondary school principals, selected alternative school and program heads, and the Supervising Director of Secondary Education (to whom secondary principals report in the system hierarchy). The group had an elected chairperson who had formed a sub-committee for purposes of contacting a consultant to assist in the planning and implementation of a summer workshop.

FIRST PLANNING MEETING: At an initial meeting with the planning group the concerns expressed for a workshop agenda ranged from clarifying "school-based planning," to understanding the research on "effective schools and effective principals." As that initial meeting was

TABLE 1

Organizational Rites in Education

Rites Associated with the Individual

RITE	SOCIAL CONSEQUENCE	EDUCATIONAL EXAMPLE
Rite of Passage	Promotes passage from one role or status to another	Granting of tenure Introduction of new administrators
Rite of Enhancement	To increase the individual's power and or organizational identity	Teacher or Administrator of the Year Ceremony
Rite of Degredation	To remove individuals and reduce their social power	3020-A Tenure Removal Procedings

Rites Associated with the Organization

RITE	SOCIAL CONSEQUENCE	EDUCATIONAL EXAMPLE
Rite of Integration	To establish a social glue, a common commitment to the organization	Annual meetings of the associations, annual picnics.
Rite of Conflict Reduction	To diminish feelings of aggression	Collective bargaining, strikes, committees, task forces.
Rite of Renewal	To refurbish the social structure/network	Quality Circles, team building or other OD programs

apparently coming toward a close the supervising director indicated that she would like the workshop to provide an opportunity for "mending some bridges" between herself and the members of The Council. Once this topic was opened to discussion it was soon apparent that this was the dominant agenda item for all concerned. Further discussion led to agreement on a flow of activities leading to the workshop. Each of the current members would be interviewed as well as the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction; at least one meeting of The Council would be observed, and selected documents would be reviewed.[30] From these data sources a workshop would be planned and implemented.

DOCUMENTS: The document review provided a background to the system and a familiarity with the jargon of the system. The system was using a matrix organizational arrangement at central office level for the development and implementation of a series of complex organizational and educational projects. The Supervising Director for Secondary Education was listed as project director for at least two of the projects. A move toward "school-based planning" was one of the projects that was of major concern; the project was being run by a planning office and appeared to require considerable data input by the schools.

A COUNCIL MEETING: A meeting of The Council was observed. The meeting began at 8 o'clock with an "executive session" which included the principals and some program directors. At 9 o'clock the group was joined by staff personnel and two assistant superintendents. Some of these left in an hour, others remained to be joined by still other administrators. The fluidity of personnel made it difficult to ascertain who was and was not a permanent part of The Council. During the meeting the communication among participants was reasonable and controlled, but complete. Problems were solved, decisions made, and minutes recorded. At this meeting appointments were made to interview the principals, program directors, and assistant superintendent. It was also indicated that it would be helpful if the interviews could be tape recorded so as to make analysis more accurate; this was particularly important since a fairly complex interview procedure was planned. There was no disagreement expressed to the taping of the interviews.

INTERVIEWS - THE SELF Q: The interview used both structured open and closed questions as well as an un-structured format based upon a technique described by Bougon[31] which he called the "self-questioning

technique." The interviewees were asked to generate as many questions as they could about themselves in relation to The Council. The purpose is to have them teach the uninformed interviewer the appropriate questions to ask in order to gain maximum understanding. Some sample questions generated by principals and program directors were:

> How much real communication is there among Council members? Why am I reluctant to reach out to Council members? Am I reluctant because I do not trust? Is there not enough trust on my part of the other Council members? How do I see myself deriving any benefit from Council meetings? To what extent am I getting the kinds of things I need from the Secondary Principals Council? Why don't I reach out to my colleagues? Do I think they can't help me as a relatively new secondary principal? Is The Council just an advisory group or is it a policy making group? Does the superintendent get the full picture of the concerns of the secondary principals? Or does he get a distilled picture that's more palatable?

From the central office members who were interviewed came another set of questions; a sample of these are:

> Why don't they act like district administrators all the time? Why do they manipulate their parents to go above them to try to get things for them when they understand that they are also management? Why can't they share good ideas among themselves? Why can't they cooperate with each other? Why won't they problem-solve real issues instead of talking about administrivia? Why are they different in the group than as individuals? Why don't they believe I'd be out for their best interests?

While all members eventually participated, about half refused to have the session tape recorded, despite the earlier agreement to that process. Some indicated little confidence in the interviewer; others just did not want to chance that their responses would be made public, perhaps because of a desire to share office gossip and personnel irrelevancies.

THE MEMOS: During the course of the interviews it was learned that two documents were viewed as particularly pertinent to the functioning of The Council. The first was a memo written by the Assistant

Superintendent to the Superintendent with a copy to the Supervising Director. The gist of the memo was an argument that the current span of control was too great for the supervising director. She was overloaded with persons reporting to her at the same time as she was burdened with responsibility for projects in the system's matrix management system. He proposed splitting her position thus reducing the number of persons reporting to her. While not indicated on the memo the assistant superintendent sent copies to all of the secondary principals and program directors.

The Supervising Director reacted to both the memo and its distribution. She felt that it was a central office concern and should not involve the principals. She wrote a sharp reaction expressing her position which was not to split the responsibility but to provide her with an assistant to help relieve the project burdens. She sent that memo to the Superintendent with a copy to the Assistant Superintendent. She told me about the memo but chose not to share it with me and indicated she did not share it with the principals on The Council.

At every interview I was told about both memos. Furthermore, every person interviewed indicated that he or she had received and read **both** memos. Later I was given a copy by one of the Council members.

INTERVIEWS - THE STRUCTURED QUESTIONS: The structured questions in the interview survey were reinforcing of the problem perspective that was emerging. One question focused on the distribution of influence in The Council and the school system.[32] The responses revealed that principals saw themselves, The Council and the Assistant Superintendent as having considerably less influence then they believed they should (see Table 2). They also saw the planning office operating out of the central office as having more of an influence on secondary education then they desired it to have.

The perceived levels of trust confirmed the concerns about trust that were generated by the "Self Q" interview technique. Table 3 shows that the mean-levels of trust appeared reasonably high, but when the ranges were examined the variance uncovered pockets of distrust within The Council.

Table 2

Levels of Perceived Influence
on Secondary Education

as perceived by

	Principals		Central Office	
	Now	Should be	Now	Should be
Principals	3.08	4.6	4.0	5.0
Program Heads	2.13	4.4	3.5	4.5
Council Chair	3.2	4.3	4.0	4.5
The Council	2.95	4.67	3.0	3.5
Supervising Director	4.4	4.3	4.5	4.5
Assistant Superintendent	2.25	4.4	2.5	4.5
C.O. Staff (Planning)	3.8	2.25	2.5	4.0

1 = no influence 5 = a great deal of influence

Insert Tables 2 and 3 about here

When asked questions about the present and preferred role of The Council the members indicated that at *present* The Council was a reactive committee with minimal power and influence. "It's a meeting where problems are dumped but not solved. . . . A powerless, reactive group bound in 'nitty-gritty' rather than instructional issues. . ." The role preferred for The Council was to participate in major decisions affecting the schools; ". . . to have policy input if not control." "It should be a group with some 'clout.'"

As a close to the interview the respondents were given an opportunity to make any comments that seemed important to them. At least two of the 13 school heads indicated that they were not clear as to why they were being interviewed as they were not certain whether or not they were members of The Council. They said they did not attend the "executive sessions" and had never been invited to the summer workshops. Another person took this opportunity to suggest there be some "sharing" at the workshop. She said:

> "We meet together, we drink together, we break bread together, particularly at these workshops when we can be more informal with one another. But all that socialization does not mean we *know* one another. How many of my colleagues know that I have been a department chair, a dean of students, an assistant principal, and now principal? That's just a small thing but it is symptomatic of this Council."

She went on to indicate that some of her colleagues were very clever in finding resources and managing the funds they could locate, but they never shared that with the newer members.

DIAGNOSIS AND DIAGNOSTIC FRAMEWORK: A framework of "organization health" was the initial guide for the investigation. This framework views the organization, in this case The Principals Council, as analogous to a living organism.[33] Three essential domains are considered as key to a complete diagnosis:

1. The Intellectual Domain: Healthy organisms and organizations carry on certain key cognitive functions, *viz* learning, memory, problem solving and decision making.

Table 3

Perceived Levels of Trust

	as perceived by	
	PRINCIPALS & PROGRAM HEADS	CENTRAL OFFICE (n = 2)
PRINCIPALS & HEADS	3.87* (1.5 - 5.0)**	4
SUPERVISING DIRECTOR	3.62 (0 - 5.0)	--***
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT	3.23 (1 - 5.0)	--

*1 = LOW TRUST; 5 = HIGH TRUST (AVERAGE)

**NUMBERS IN PARENTHESES INDICATE THE RANGE OF THE RESPONSES

***REPORTING THESE SCORES WOULD VIOLATE THE ANONYMITY ASSURED RESPONDENTS

2. The Physical Domain: A set of physical structures are necessary to sustain the organism/organization as it exists to carry out its mission. Key variables in this set include: communication adequacy, resource utilizations, power equalization, and hierarchical balance.

3. The Emotional Domain: The healthy organism/organization has an affective component that differentiates living systems from robots or machine systems. Here the key variables are: a spirit of invention, a sense of autonomy, positive self-concept (morale and cohesiveness), and life-enhancing valuing which is an endeavor to enhance three essential lives; that of the individual, the organization, and the society in which that organization is embedded.

Applying the framework helped to make initial sense of what was otherwise disparate data and, therefore, narrow the domain for further analysis. In the Physical Domain the group was reasonably well off except for a question of who was and who was not in The Council. In the Intellectual Domain there were indications of problem solving and decision making, but these processes appeared to be primarily directed from the administrative hierarchy and therefore negatively impacting the other members.

There also seemed to be some other important areas of concern in the Affective Domain. The Council was a group that had learned to play its cards very close to the chest. Members did not trust one another very far; and new members should expect to act that way as well. There did not seem to be any systematic way that knowledge was passed on to new members. They were kept in the dark and only expected to try things that they could discover for themselves. It was particularly with regards to the mutual respect of the organization, its members and the social environment that deeper concerns were raised. The ideological orientation of The Council was geared toward particularism and "dog-eat-dog," let each look out for self and self alone. Raising the ideological issue brought the problem into focus as one concerned with "group culture." It appeared that the group culture had formed over time, but it had not been examined by its members as to content and effect. It was now opportune to juxtapose the cultural framework of "organizational rites" and the behaviors of this Principals Council for a diagnosis.

With respect to rites associated with individuals, it appeared that the *passage rite* from lower level administrator to principal was

minimal or nil. New principals were appointed without consultation with existing members. Often this made new appointees suspect, that is they were viewed as the "favorites" of the existing hierarchy and not to be trusted. On the group level the *meeting rituals* reinforced the clandestine aura of The Council. Contributing factors were the "executive sessions" which began each of the day-long monthly meetings. Persons were either deliberately excluded or an in-group -- out-group phenomenon emerged and allowed to continue without regard to its effects on individuals. Purloined memos were circulated behind the scenes; persons did not share information; problems were the responsibility of the individuals and not the group. In general it appeared to be a culture of secrecy, mystery, intrigue, but most of all of closedness. While they had a history of *rites of renewal* in the form of summer workshops, these tended to be traditional work sessions in preparation for the coming academic year or, if team building were an agenda item the outcomes were superficial and had not had apparent effects on the existing group culture. This hypothesis of a culture of closedness would need to be tested.

Since Trice and Beyer had hypothesized the efficacy of organizational rites as a vehicle for culture change[34], it seemed sensible to use the summer workshop, as a renewal rite, to facilitate a culture change, particularly if it were coupled with existing, or newly created rites. Therefore the intervention strategy selected was for a workshop where the members would have opportunity to examine the implications of openness and closedness and help them to determine ways to alter the group ideology.

THE SUMMER WORKSHOP: The Council met in a park setting that emphasized a relaxed and informal interaction. The general flow of the workshop was as follows:

- Day 1 - *Survey Feedback*: From the very beginning it was decided to emphasize openness by giving to the participants as full a report of the data as possible using the "organizational health" framework as an organizing scheme. It was also necessary that the group define itself both in terms of mission and membership as an expectation for "openness" is difficult to support if there is uncertainty as to whom you need to be open with and why. The group accomplished the dual tasks of a definition of membership and a mission statement that was agreeable to both school heads and central office.

Toward the end of the first day an additional thrust toward openness was taken. In a "coaching atmosphere" I shared with the supervising director the knowledge that her memo, which she had believed restricted in dissemination, had been given to me. I also indicated that all principals had read it. She wanted to know who gave it to me; I indicated that was privileged information and was really unimportant. Maintaining a posture that this kind of position should be treated as restricted information was contributing to a norm for closedness; rightly or wrongly she was reinforcing closedness as a group value even though she said it was contrary to her beliefs. She accepted the information in the spirit of "coaching" and indicated she would need to deliberate on it that evening.

• Day 2 - *Role Clarification and Confrontation:* The second day was designed to be even more reinforcing of openness than the first. The group participated in a variation of an exercise known as "Imaging."[35] The principals and program heads were asked to list positive behaviors occurring at the central office level that were helpful to them; they listed 20 such behaviors. They were also asked to list non-helpful behaviors, the sorts of activities that interferred with the successful operation of their jobs. This resulted in a list of 25 items of concern. Central office participants[36] did the same for the school and program heads. Their lists were more broadly stated than the principals' with 7 behaviors on the "positive" side and just 2 negative behaviors. The lists were alternately shared and paraphrased to assure the originating group that the message was heard. This proved to be a significant exercise. Two key items show why this was so:

1. Principals indicated that the strained relations between the Assistant Superintendent and Supervising Director were problematic for school heads. This was a high risk statement to make; it was also a significant contribution toward a establishing a new value of openness. The response of the central office personnel was to recognize that strains had emerged, that the clandestine memo response was part of that, and that they would work to resolve such differences. In fact, during the workshop itself these two central office administrators took the opportunity presented them to resolve many of their differences.

2. Central Office pointed to the "executive sessions" as being somewhat bothersome. In discussion it came out that both school and central office administrators often felt uneasy walking into a meeting that had been underway for an hour. The identification of this element was support for the hypothesis of the closed group culture. The

principals responded by agreeing to discontinue executive sessions whenever regular meetings were scheduled. In conjunction with the expressed need for greater sharing and for dealing with both educational as well as management issues the principals chose to expand their meetings to two per month; one for business and one for the educational concerns. They also decided to hold weekly breakfast meetings. These would be short meetings and would essentially replace the executive sessions. Initially they considered restricting these to principal and progam heads; later they left attendance open to others should they chose to attend.

Day 3 - *Addressing School Tasks:* This was the day that had been reserved for the many items that The Council needed to address for that school year. They chose to suspend that activity and complete the "imaging" exercise. This left just an afternoon session for them to address the practical school tasks. It was suggested to the chair that the group set its agenda for the term by generating a list of concerns, topics, etc. Again the thrust was to open the controls to the group.

The workshop concluded with all the participants reassembling at a nearby restaurant. The atmosphere of this affair was informal with much toasting of their success and expressions of continued togetherness for the year.

FOLLOW-UP ON COUNCIL CHANGES: Follow-up phone calls were made to the supervising director and selected Council members to identify whether or not changes had occurred. These calls revealed that the bi-weekly meetings were now occurring, **without** executive sessions. Weekly breakfast meetings had been instituted and occurred regularly with all members (including the Supervising Director) invited to attend. The executive sessions had been dropped entirely. The assistant superintendent has moved on to a superintendency and a new assistant superintendent has been appointed. Five months after the workshop a regular meeting of The Council was attended so as to document changes in behaviors that might suggest a change in group culture.

• *The Meeting:* While there were some minor changes in membership and a change in the elected chair, most of the members sat in the same seats as the meeting previously observed. In the current meeting there were significantly more occurrences of "joking behavior" and informal support. The language of the supervising director had shifted from "I, me," and "you" to "we, us" and "our." There appeared to be more Council decision making as opposed to the previous meeting

where The Council was asked to ratify decisions already formulated. This participation was also seen in the recognition of a sub-committee that had helped formulate a budget proposal package. The sub-committee took ownership and presented the budget; the previous behaviors were generally for the supervising director to develop and present and the group to discuss and ratify.

At one point The Council took a break and was joined by the Superintendent of Schools. He made a humerous presentation for service "above and beyond the call" to one of the new principals who had suffered a broken foot on the job. At lunch I was able to interview more that fifty-percent of the members in one-on-one conversations. Without exception these members perceived a significant and positive change in The Council. Typical were remarks like: "This is just not the same Council", "I can't believe how different we are with one another." The probes to such remarks indicated feelings of togetherness and a greater willingess to share both information and responsibility, at a level and intensity not previously experienced by the "veterans" in the group. The overall assessment was extremely positive - "This group is definitely different - we hope it will continue."

An Analysis of the Case with an Organizational Rites Framework

As indicated earlier, the organizational rites framework for analysis and change was a serendipitous match. The intervention was not entered with this framework. The rites concept took on special meaning during the diagnosis as plans were being generated for the workshop, during the conduct of the workshop itself, and in this reflective paper. The framework helped to highlight what seemed to be a dominant value in the culture of The Principals Council.

The participants in this case were all highly qualified administrators, yet they had evolved a way of operating that promoted isolation rather than inner-connectedness. Isolation here refers to their cutting off of themselves not only from each other, but also from central office. This was reflected in their meeting behaviors, in the extreme ranges of trust-distrust, and in the selectivity of operating rituals they had come to employ. In a previous article it has been argued that isolation of beliefs, as exemplified in the behaviors noted above, is a strong indicator of the closed nature of a system structure.[37]

Survey feedback helped the group to understand its behaviors and to better recognize an operating ideology that apparently placed high value on closedness, individuality and isolationism. The workshop afforded an opportunity for the group to reconsider its ideology and devise strategies for change. These centered on a change in meeting behaviors and a promise (an implicit value statement) to avoid a circumvention of the authority system. Five months after the workshop it seemed that the promised changes were implemented. More frequent meetings with greater sharing were conducted; negative behaviors of secrecy (as with executive sessions) had been eliminated. The outcomes, as perceived by participants and an outside observer, included increased interpersonal trust, higher confidence in self, the group, and the central office staff, and a participative mode of operation that suggested a positive regard or valuing of openness.

From the perspective of the six rites elaborated earlier, the contrast in cultural values before and after the workshop may be made more evident. Each of the rites will be considered here with a brief analysis of The Council prior to the intervention presented first, then a brief post intervention statement.

1. **Rites of Passage**

• Pre: The Council had neglected to implement any systematic mechanism for introducing new members to the expectations of the group or the system. Such orientations as were needed had become the responsibility of the Supervising Director and were conducted outside of The Council sessions.

• Post: The Council had a new appointee who joined the group for the first time at the summer workshop. In the follow-up session it was indicated that it was useful to welcome new members through this mechanism. The experience of the workshop exposed the new principal to an evolving set of expectations about the group and its behaviors, about trust, openness, and sharing.

2. **Rites of Enhancement**

• Pre: The supervising director was expected to "reward" and "punish." She could recommend for merit (enhancing status and financial position) and also reprimand through the normal evaluation process. One principal indicated that he did not know who received merit or how the decisions were made. He did not know that he had been recommended and would be shortly receiving a merit increase.

• Post: No change noted at the time of follow-up.

3. **Rites of Degredation**
   - Pre: None noted.
   - Post: None noted.

4. **Rites of Integration**
   - Pre: The group talked about the food and drink from previous workshops they had attended together as well as an end of the year party that was held at the home of the supervising director. While these may have promoted a temporary sense of togetherness, such feelings were quite transitory and shallow. Recall the words of the relatively new principal quoted earlier: "... We meet together, we drink together, we break bread together ... but that does not mean we know one another." The group dinners or cocktail gatherings contributed to a valuing or tolerance for informality and a temporary togetherness but did not promote long-lasting mutual understanding and trust.
   - Post: The same kinds of affairs continued to be held but the outcomes were apparently different. The members indicated both after the workshop and five months later that they were now beginning to get to know one another. One person said that he learned something new from each of their informal gatherings. The facetious award given by the superintendent would have been a highly unlikely occurrence in the pre-workshop Council. Their new found knowledge of one another supported a high level of interpersonal joking behavior that might well have been greeted with paranoia in earlier meetings.

5. **Rites of Conflict Reduction**
   - Pre: Meetings of the whole and of sub-committees was the major form of this rite noted and was a central focus of the case. Observations of the behaviors in meetings indicated that conflict was met with silence or withdrawal more so than with problem solving and discussion. Members had learned to keep their experiences to themselves, to listen to proposals in their meetings and react, but not share so as to effect substantive changes in the proposals. There was great uncertainty as to the specific "mission" of The Council; consequently the meeting agenda reflected the governance or control needs of the director rather than serving the needs of the members. Individually both school heads and the director expressed the same concerns, an unwillingness to share and an apparent unwillingness to deal with educational issues rather than "nitty-gritty" trivia. Members had learned to gripe in private but acquiesce in the public light of the meeting. Finally, the group had evolved a use of the "executive session" as a mechanism for exclusive conversation. The meeting behaviors, content, and format seemed indicative of an operationalizing of the value of system closedness.

•Post: The Council underwent substantial changes in its meeting rites after the summer workshop. Most notable was the dropping of the executive session. All parts of the regular meetings were open to all Council participants. The behavior of members was also different in the meetings: the frequency of joking behavior suggested an intimacy and increase in interpersonal trust. In addition, new meeting opportunities were created to deal with issues of immediacy. These too were open to all members. Agendas for a meeting calendar and for individual meetings were now set by the members under the guidance of the elected chair. At the first of these agenda-setting sessions both principals and supervising director contributed items for future sessions. The expressive consequences of the changes in the meeting rite were, at least for the first half of the school year, a minimizing of "we-they" differences among the principals, the program heads, and the supervising director. With the diminished differences there was an increased openness in interaction and in the mutual influence of the participants.

6. **Rites of Renewal**

This rite does not lend itself to a "pre-post" analysis. The summer workshop was a primary change mechanism rather than a reflection of a change in the group culture. The participants reported that workshops were a regular part of their yearly activity. They had had team building as well as work-dominated sessions often. However, it seemed that these workshops while functional, did not have any lasting effect on the culture of The Council. Why did this workshop, as a renewal rite, have a different effect?

We can only speculate but it seems plausible that the outcomes noted were in direct relation to the congruence of the workshop goal with its modus operandi. This workshop had as a goal the increased openness of The Council culture, and made use of that value of openness as a fundamental operating premise. Data were presented for the group to deal with, coaching encouraged open exchange, sub-groups were facilitated toward openness, and the exercises, such as that of "imaging," were conducted in such a way as to prevent participants from running away from their behaviors and the consequences.

But this did not mean that The Council would have to implement all it has done. Again it is only speculation but it appears that the combination of a reinforced rite of renewal, (the summer workshop), in conjunction with the experiences of changed meeting rites, has brought about a change in the group's behaviors. From another persepctive it appears that the Principals Council has made significant movement toward becoming a "strong group,"

where group strength refers to the extent to which a larger social unit shapes individual thought and action.[38] Where there is high group strength there is a "tight identification of members with one another as a corporate entity. Individuals are expected to act on behalf of the collective whole, and the corporate body is expected to act in the normative interests of its members."[39] On the other end of this continuum is low group strength where the experience is competitive, entrepreneurial, and the individual does not feel constrained by a sense of duty to others.[40]

> *Gross and Rayner have thought of five indices of a strong group: proportion of time spent in the group compared with total allocatable time; frequency of meeting; closeness of interlocking character links; the proportion of shared to unshared links and strength of the boundary of the group.*[41]

In applying this to the changes in The Principals Council it appears that at least three, and possibly four of the indices were considerably increased after the summer workshop rite. More actions are likely needed to assure the maintenance of the emergent values as with development of more approriate rites of passage and rites of integration, but the beginnings of a strong group makes the likelihood of a strong culture a greater probability. And, in full circle, the organizational culture literature has seen strong cultures associated with corporate excellence and organizational effectiveness.[42]

Some General Implications

It is recognized that a sample of one is hardly sufficient evidence for stating any firm or hard and fast conclusions. Nor is it sufficient to leave the study at a point that begs for generalizations. As a compromise, some speculative comments about the outcomes are offered.

1. It appears that the organizational rites framework as an indicator of group culture is at least useful for reflective analysis, for developing understandings of the ideological orientations of key groups in the organization. The framework may also be useful for understanding some elements of change in an organization. The focus on rites provides a tool for "etic" (outsider) interpretations building from the "emic" (internal) meanings provided through the "Self-Questioning" data collection.

2. Going well beyond the data it would seem likely that the organizational rites could act as a useful reminder to executives of the organization for frequent monitoring of the rites to determine the extent to which they are congruent with the desired beliefs and values of the system. This is particularly appropriate in education where the stagnant teaching force of the past decade has increased the likelihood that rites of passage for introducing new teachers to the system have become strange and forgotten activities in the organization. Trice and Beyer raise the concern that rites, particularly at the individual level, have as much potential for inhibiting as they do for facilitating change in the organization, especially if they are ignored and not somehow incorporated within the change effort.[43]

3. For organization development activities of "diagnosis" and "intervention" the rites framework seems promising, if not as a primary framework for analysis and change, at least as a supplement to the conceptual schema for this group rite.

4. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, there appear to be some interesting questions or hypotheses that emerge for future testing. For example, can the identification of rites within an organization lead to predictions about future functioning and future behaviors? The observations in this case study seem to point to that possibility. What combinations of rites are most salient for what kinds of organizational changes and under what conditions? In the case described here the intervention built on an existing, or at least familiar, rite in that system (the workshop as a renewal rite), and members focused their changes on increasing the frequency and modifying the form of their meeting rite. No new rites were introduced at the time. Is transformation of existing rites more effective than introduction of new rites for effecting change in the system? On this question Trice and Beyer caution that where certain existing rites have staunch supporters, "it may be more practical to try to modify them to incorporate the new values."[44] They also suggest the strategy of abolishing rites that express or foster ideologies and values that are counterproductive or no longer desireable. In The Principals Council the group decided to drop the "executive session" since it was creating more distrust than group unity.

What would have happened had the change in the use of rites been an imposed rather than group decision? In what ways, if any, can rites in an organization clarify the participative decisionmaking frameworks that have emerged in the literature?[45] For example, participative decisionmaking may be a rite for conflict reduction; but if issues or practice push the rite into a

zone of indifference, then will the continuance of the rite be a reinforcer for the system values?

As a final word, it would seem that this is a framework that should interest both academicians and practitioners alike, as it appears to provide equally for both analysis and practice. But that too remains to be tested.

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[1]I would like to acknowledge the helpful comments of Robert E. Jennings, Mike M. Milstein and Sterne Roufa.

[2]Waterman, P. and Peters, T. *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies.* New York: Harper and Row, Inc., 1982.

[3]Deal, T., and Kennedy, A. A. *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1982.

[4]Morey, N. C. and F. Luthans. "Refining the Displacement of Culture and the Use of Scenes and Themes in Organizational Studies," *Academy of Management Review*, 10, 2 (1985), 219-229.

[5]Some examples are cited in Firestone, W. A. and Wilson, B. L. "Using Bureaucratic and Cultural Linkages to Improve Instruction: The Principal's Contribution. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 1985, 21, 2, 7-30. and in S. L. Lightfoot, *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture.* New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983.

[6]Smircich, L. "Concepts of Culture and Organizational Analysis," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28; 1 (1983): 339-358.

[7]Firestone and Wilson. "Using Bureacratic Linkeages." p. 27.

[8]While often organizations are viewed as having a single culture, it is also possible to consider that multiple cultures exist within the dominant organizational culture. Louis, M. R. "Sourcing Workplace Cultures: Why, When, and How" in Kilmann, R. H. , M J. Saxton and R. Serpa. *Gaining Control of the Corporate Culture*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Publishers, 1985) views the vertical slices of the organization (a product line or school) as possibly having a significant culture difference from the other product lines; likewise a horizontal slice such as a committee, group, or department may evolve a set of common understandings to produce a unique group culture.

[9]Trice, H. M. and J. M. Beyer. "Studying Organizational Cultures Through Rites and Ceremonials," *Academy of Management Review.* 9,4 (1984) 653-669.

[10]Wolcott, H. F. *The Man in the Principal's Office: An Ethnography.* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1984) is a classic example. See also R. Barnhardt et. al., *Anthropology and Educational Administration* (Tucson, Ariz.: Impresora Sahuaro, 1979); and Q. Willis, "The Work Activity

of School Principals: An Observational Study," *The Journal of Educational Administration*, 18 (July 1980).

[11]Wilkins, A. L. "Organizational Stories as an Expression of Management Philosophy," Unpublished Dissertation, Stanford University, 1979.

[12]See for example, Bougon, M. G. "Uncovering Cognitive Maps: The Self-Q Technique" in G. Morgan (ed.) *Beyond Method: Strategies for Social Research*, Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Pub., 1983.

[13]S. K. Barley, "Semiotics and the Study of Occupational and Organizational Cultures," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28; 1 (1983) 393-413; also see R. Barthes. *Mythologies*, London: Granada Publishing, Ltd. 1972.

[14]Trice and Beyer. "Studying Organizational Cultures."

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Van Gennep, A. *Rites of Passage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

[18]Trice and Beyer. "Studying Organizational Cultures." Also relevant is the process of teacher supervision as a formal ritual. For examples see Goldhammer, R., R. H. Anderson and R. J. Kajewski. *Clinical Supervision: Special Methods for the Supervision of Teachers*, 2nd edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1980.

[19]Trice, H. M. and J. M. Beyer. "Using Six Organizational Rites to Change Culture," in R. H. Kilmann, M. J. Saxton and R. Serpa. *Gaining Control of the Corporate Culture*, San Francisco: Jossey Bass, Inc., Pub. 1985. p. 378.

[20]Trice and Beyer. "Using Rites." p. 380.

[21]Jacunski, E. T. *3020-A and the School Administrator*, SAANYS, Action Ideas Series, Booklet No. 1

[22]Trice and Beyer, "Studying Organizational Cultures."

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid. pp. 17-18.

[26]Ibid. p. 19.

[27]Ibid. Adapted from their Table 3.

[28]Trice and Beyer. "Using Rites" p. 393.

[29]The number of members on The Council is imprecise as they, themselves, expressed uncertainty as to who was or was not an official member. This was one of the issues that was dealt with in the intervention.

[30]The data collection process followed a medical model of diagnosis by going from least to most obtrusive processes for data acquisition. This is also the recommendation of Alderfer, C. P. "The Methodology of Organizational Diagnosis," *Professional Psychology*, 11, 3 (June 1980) 459-468.

[31]Bougon. "Uncovering Cognitive Maps"

[32]The question followed the format of Tannenbaum, A. *Control in Organizations*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968.

[33]The "Living System" and "Organizational Health" framework is derived mainly from Miles, M. B. "Planned Change and Organizational Health: Figure and Ground," *Change Processes in the Public Schools*, Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration. Oregon University, 1965; Miller, J. G. "Living Systems: The Organization," *Behavioral Science*, 17, 1: (January, 1972)1-182. and a synthesis in Conway, J. S. "An Organismic--Medical Conceptualization of Organizational Health and School Consultation," State University of New York at Buffalo, 1981 (mimeo).

[34]Trice and Beyer. "Using Rites."

[35]Schmuck, R., P. J. Runkel, J. H. Arends and R. L. Arends. *The Second Handbook of Organization Development in Schools*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Mayfield Pub. Co., 1977.

[36]Only two persons from Central Office participated in the three days of the workshop; the supervising director and the assistant superintendent.

[37]Conway, J. A. "A Perspective on Organizational Cultures and Organizational Belief Structure," *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 21, 4, (Fall, 1985) 7-25. For another perspective on the negative effects of isolation on a culture see I. Asimov's science fiction novel *The Robots of Dawn*, (New York: Doubleday, 1983).

[38]Gross, J. L. and S. Rayner. *Measuring Culture: A Paradigm for the Analysis of Social Organization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) p. 5.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid. p. 6.

[41]Douglas, M. "Introduction" in Gross and Rayner, *Measuring Culture*. p. xxiv.

[42]Waterman and Peters, *In Search of Excellence*, also see Deal and Kennedy, *Corporate Cultures*.

[43]Trice and Beyer, "Using Rites."

[44]Ibid. p. 391.

[45]For a summary of such frameworks see Conway, J. A. "The Myth, Mystery and Mastery of Participative Decision Making in Education." *Educational Administration Quarterly*, XX, 3, (Summer 1984) 11-40.